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ABSTRACT

Theoretically, schools that practice school-based management (SBM) should be more effective. However, researchers do not agree whether the effects of SBM are negative or positive. This paper discusses how the practice of a self-management framework (in which key actors practice self-management cycles at the school, group, and teacher levels) could facilitate the school, groups, and individual teachers in continuous self-learning and development, and in turn enhance multilevel performance in the school. The paper describes the School Management Initiative (SMI) in Hong Kong schools, and analyzes the recommendations set out in the SMI policy document. The paper then proposes directions for further development of school-based management in Hong Kong: (1) focus on human initiative; (2) introduce multi-level self-management; (3) maintain consistent practice across all levels; and (4) foster student self-management and development. One table is included. (Contains 21 references.) (LMI)

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Multi-level Self Management in school : Further Development of School-based Management in Hong Kong

Wing Ming CHEUNG **Yin Cheong CHENG**

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Correspondence Address :
Bonham Campus, 2 Hospital Rd., Mid-Level,
Hong Kong

e-mail : wmcheung@boc.ied.edu.hk
Fax : (852) 2858 5943

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Multi-level Self Management in School: Further Development of School-based Management in Hong Kong

Wing Ming CHEUNG **Yin Cheong CHENG**

Centre for Research and Development
The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Abstract

Contemporary practice of school-based management world-wide aims at providing schools with increased autonomy so that they may acquire the necessary flexibility, responsiveness and proactiveness to meet the challenges ahead in the changing external and internal school environment. Theoretically, schools practising school-based management may therefore be more effective. However, researchers do not have convergent views regarding the effect of school-based management. Some noted very encouraging and positive effects. On the other hand, some observed fairly negative results with the absence of empirical evidence that school-based management is related to students' educational outcomes.

Responding to these observations, Cheung & Cheng (1996a) asserted that the effectiveness of school-based management depends largely on the self management behavior of teachers working in groups and individually. In order to maximize the benefit of school-based management, key actors should practise self management cycles at the school, group and teacher levels. This paper discusses how the practice of this self management framework could facilitate the school, groups and individual teachers in continuous self learning and development, and in turn enhance multi-level performance in school.

Taking the practice of School Management Initiative (SMI) - as one type of school-based management) in Hong Kong schools as an example, the paper first analyses the recommendations set out in the SMI policy document. Then the authors examine the degree to which these recommendations could facilitate multi-level self management of the key actors in school. Based on the result of the analysis and the conception of Cheung & Cheng (1996a), the paper proposes directions for further development of school-based management in Hong Kong. It is hoped that the recommended directions may provide insights for both the policy makers and school practitioners to further develop the practice of school-based management specifically in Hong Kong, and generally in the international context.

Introduction

The movement of school-based management in different parts of the world aims at providing schools with increased autonomy so that they may acquire the necessary flexibility, responsiveness and proactiveness to meet the challenges ahead in the changing external and internal school environment.

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Theoretically, schools practising school-based management may therefore be more effective. However, extant literature suggests that the effectiveness of school-based management is not confirmed. In particular, there is an absence of empirical evidence that school-based management is related to students' educational outcomes (e.g. Arnot, Bullockd & Thomas, 1992; Cheng, 1992; Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990; Mitchell, 1991). Also, a big number of implementation difficulties hinder the success of the school management reforms.

Addressing these observations, Caldwell (1994), Symths (1995) and Cheung & Cheng (1996a, 1996b) viewed that contemporary practices have seemingly put very little effort to involve and facilitate teachers in self managing their work. If we believe that the effectiveness of the school largely depends on the work of teachers, self management in school should, apart from school level issues, also involve teachers at the group and individual levels (Cheng, 1996; Cheung & Cheng, 1996a).

In order to understand the deeper meaning of self management in school, Cheung & Cheng (1996a) indicated that a multi-level framework is critical for practising self management in school to pursue education quality and school effectiveness. They also demonstrated that the effective practice of this multi-level self management framework is significantly associated with the enhanced performance in school in terms of organisational effectiveness, teachers' work norms and job attitudes, as well as students' educational outcomes (see Cheung & Cheng, 1997a). Confirmation of the framework has shed light to illuminate the links between the practice of school-based management and performance in school. Caldwell, Gurr, Hill, & Rowe (1997) also shared this view.

The multi-level self management framework may provide insights for formulating the future development directions of school-based management. This paper is an attempt to tap the advantages of the framework in drawing up these directions. It will first analyze the recommendations set out in the School Management Initiative (SMI - one type of school-based management) in Hong Kong. Then the paper will examine the degree to which these recommendations could facilitate multi-level self management in school. Finally, based on the results of the analysis and the conception of Cheung & Cheng (1996a), the paper will propose directions for further development of school-based management in Hong Kong. It is hoped that the recommended directions may provide insights for both the policy makers and school practitioners to further develop the practice of school-based management specifically in Hong Kong, and generally in the international context.

Multi-level Self Management in School

According to Cheung & Cheng (1996a), self management in school may be practised at three levels, namely the school, group and individual teacher levels. Each follows a five-stage self iterative management cycle. The characteristics of these cycles are summarized as follows (for detail, please refer to Cheung & Cheng, 1996a):

Self Management at the School Level. The initial stage of school self management process is Environmental Analysis in which the school (including all the concerned school members) as a whole reflects on its internal and external environment relevant and crucial to its existence in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The results of analysis will serve as the base for planning. In the second stage, Planning and Structuring, the school establishes school direction, policies, programs, budget, organization structure and work procedures. The practice of

participative decision making in this stage may develop a sense of ownership among those participated and the resulted resolutions will have a greater chance of successful implementation. The establishment of appropriate organizational structure and work procedures includes an appropriate communication flow, delineation of relationships, job specifications and position requirements, chain of command and other related issues. With attainable school plans and appropriate structure, the self managing process then proceeds to the Staffing and Directing stage. Staffing includes the recruitment and induction of new staff as well as the professional development of all staff for competence in achieving the assigned tasks. The school at this stage also focuses on delegating responsibilities to staff, motivating staff towards outputting quality work, coordinating and providing directions to staff. Following the above stages, the school as a whole implements the planned programs. During and after implementation, the performance of the school as a whole is evaluated and monitored with its established reporting and evaluation system as well as the reward system for its task/programme groups. The information obtained is valuable for the school to move forward to start the Environmental Analysis stage of the next self management cycle. In this way, the cycle of self management at school level continues. The above cyclic self management process allows the school as a whole to be aware of the changing challenges, to readjust its school mission, policies and action plans to these new challenges. In this way, self renewal and learning occur as a result of the school's adaptability to the ever changing external and internal environment.

Self Management at the Group Level. A work group may be considered as a small organization in the school. Thus, the conception of self management at the school level might be extended to the empowered work groups. Within the available autonomy and boundaries in the school, self management process at the group level may also include Environmental Analysis, Planning and Structuring, Staffing and Directing, Implementing, and monitoring and evaluating. Practising the self management cycle, groups can be aware of the ever changing internal and external challenges, develop group members to face and manage these challenges, and achieve the group and school goals. In this cycle, groups are self educating and self renewing.

Self Management at the Individual Teacher Level. A self managing group without self managing individuals will not function effectively. A self management process that facilitates the individual teachers to be responsive to external challenges and enables their continuous self learning is important. The self management process at the group and school levels presented above with appropriate modifications may serve this purpose. Thus, it is conceptualized that within the available autonomy and boundaries, the individual teachers work through their self management process including Environmental Analysis, Planning and Affiliating, Developing and Directing, and Monitoring and Evaluating, as follows. At the initial stage, teachers as individuals reflect on their internal and external environment. Internally, they reflect on their personal attributes in terms of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as a member in the group and school. Externally, they reflect on their relationship with other members, students' ability and parental expectations, competition and co-operation with colleagues, and etc. Then, based on the results of environmental analysis, they formulate their own directions and courses of action (e.g. the ways of conducting extra-curricular activities for students) to accomplish the assigned tasks within the available autonomy and allocated resources. Their action goals and

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plans should be consistent with the group and school goals. They also establish good affiliation and relationship with colleagues, students, parents and members of the community. Furthermore, they invest their effort in developing their professional competence through frequent attendance in professional enrichment programs and exchanges with colleague. They direct themselves to the planned goals and activities by proper allocation of personal resources, such as time and attention. In the Implementing stage, they improve their actual performance in implementing the program through frequent rehearsals, self reward and self punishment. They monitor and evaluate their performance through self observation in accordance with their set performance standards. They then use the results of self evaluation to initiate their next self management cycle. Through continuous self management and learning, teachers become more flexible, adaptable and effective in achieving their assignments.

With mutually consistent self management practices at the individual, group, and school levels, the key actors at multi-levels will be working strategically towards the school goals. Thus, internal wastage of precious and limited resources will also minimized. Synergy may possibly be generated to drive the school as a whole to become a learning organization that continuously develops in different aspects, adapts to the changing environment and meets the internal and external needs and challenges. As a result, enhanced performance in school may be expected.

School Management Initiative (SMI) in Hong Kong

Prior to 1991, all public sector schools in Hong Kong were controlled centrally through various mechanisms such as a core curriculum for all; standardized management procedures; tightly controlled budgets; and standardized resource input. Variability among schools was small. In 1991, the situation began to change gradually by a new policy entitled "School Management Initiative" (SMI). Some of the characteristics of the policy are that it (1) attempts to define clearly the roles of school sponsoring bodies, school managers, supervisors, and principals to ensure greater accountability; (2) provides teachers, parents , and alumni a greater degree of participation in decision making and management of the school; (3) requires more systematic planning, evaluation and reporting of the school's performance; and (4) provides more flexibility in resource utilization in meeting individual school's needs (Cheng, 1995; Education & Manpower and Education Department, 1991).

Clearly, the policy facilitates the management of schools to shift from an external control management model to a more self management orientation (Cheng, 1995). By adopting this management initiative, schools are decentralized with more autonomy in utilization of funds and resources, more flexible in site-level operations and more accountable for their performance.

Participating in SMI is on a voluntary basis. All public sector secondary schools may join the initiative starting September 1991, and all public sector primary schools starting September 1993. After several years of implementation, the Education Commission of Hong Kong drew conclusion from the experience of SMI schools that such management framework is helpful for schools to achieve their goals and formulate long range plans to meet their unique conditions and student needs. Based on this, the Commission therefore recommended that school-based management should be practised by all school by the year 2000 (this is also known as the SMI 2000 policy) so that they could provide quality education

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according to their own unique situations and students needs (Education Commission, 1996).

The recommendations of the SMI policy are summarized below:

1. The role of Education Department should change from detailed control to support and advice.
2. Education Department should remain as a government department and its function should not be replaced by a nongovernmental public body.
3. Education Department should define the information needs of the schools education programme and develop appropriate management information systems.
4. The roles of those responsible for delivering education in schools should be defined more clearly.
5. Every School Management Committee should be required to prepare a constitution setting out the aims and objectives of the school and the procedures and practices by which it will be managed.
6. The role and the legal/contractual position of the sponsor in respect of school management should be clarified.
7. The role and duties of the Supervisor in relation to the School Management Committee and Principal should be reviewed.
8. The role and responsibilities of the principal should be set out in a Principal's Manual.
9. Formal staff reporting procedures should be required in all aided schools.
10. School management frameworks should allow for participation in decision making, according to formal procedures, by all concerned parties including: all teaching staff, the principal, the School Management Committee; and (to an appropriate degree) parents and students.
11. Funds for aided schools should be provided as far as possible in the form of a block grant. Each school should have authority to decide its own spending pattern in the light of central education polices and its own defined needs.
12. Schools should have discretion to use savings from up to 5% vacancies for any staff or non-staff purpose.
13. Schools should have more flexibility to tap sources of non-government funding for above standard items. In particular, they should be permitted to charge Tong Fai to all pupils, up to a reasonable amount.
14. The government should ensure that the sponsor's contribution continues to represent a reasonable proportion of the cost of setting up a school.
15. In the longer term, serious consideration should be given to the merging of salary and non-salary grants so that managements could be fully responsible for managing their schools and a link between resources and performance could then be introduced.
16. (this recommendation is about the pilot scheme and implementation schedule)
17. Each school should produce an annual School Plan to guide its activities during the year.

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18. Each school should prepare an Annual School Profile covering its activities in the previous year and detailing school performance in a number of key areas.

Schools practising SMI generally have acquired positive experience in site-based decision making and flexibility in resource utilization. Indeed, the SMI policy has started off a major and crucial move to create the necessary conditions that facilitate school-based management in Hong Kong. Compared with the development of similar initiatives in other countries, SMI is still at its early stage but in the right direction of development. With the multi-level self management framework in mind, the following section will attempt to analyze the possible contributions of the SMI components to facilitate multi-level self management in school. It is hoped that through identifying these possible contributions, more insights may be generated to further develop the present practice of SMI, and bring effective practice of multi-level self management in school. In this way, the full advantage of SMI to enhance school performance may be attained.

Contributions of SMI to Multi-level Self Management

Analyzing the various recommendations of the SMI policy, we can see that it has provided a general framework of decentralization authority largely at the school level. In particular, it also outlines a direction to call for participation of teachers, parents and students (to a certain extent) in decision making. It has stipulated the need to have teacher and parent representations in the school's Management Committees; and the establishment of parent-teacher associations.

It should be noted that the recommendations of the policy are mainly focused on building up more flexibility, and teacher and parent participation at the site level. Taking the multi-level self management framework as a yardstick, we cannot see a coherent and clear organisation between the various policy components at the school, group and individual teacher levels. Without a clear view of the links between various components, school practitioners may possibly have rather fragmented and sometimes superficial implementation of the policy.

Contributions to the School Level. Specifically, the possible contributions of the various components of SMI to multi-level self management in school are analysed and summarized in Table 1. We may see that the SMI policy in general could facilitate the school to self manage its business at the school level and make a number of contributions to practice of the five stages of the self management framework. However, a closer look at the various SMI components suggests that the internal relationship between these components at the school level is not clear. Apart from this, a second area of concern is the lack of the concept of practising a self continuous learning and development process which is an indispensable key to the success of school-based management or self management. Thus, in order to tap the best from the SMI policy, it is recommended that a concrete and coherent management process should be introduced to facilitate the school as a whole to engage in continuous self learning and development for achievement of its strategic goals.

Contributions to the Group Level. Examining the components of the SMI policy, we may find that its contributions to facilitate group level self management is clear only at two stages of the self management cycle (Table 1 refers). First, the policy set up a frame for work groups to develop their own goals and plans of activities. This corresponding planning element at the group level is crucial and essential for the school to achieve its set goals. Another area of contribution is the requirement of a

component of group or program evaluation. The work groups' own self evaluation will contribute to the preparation of the school profile and the self monitoring of group performance.

It is not clear that the policy can contribute to the total group self management. It does not have clear mechanisms that facilitate the work groups to perform activities related to environmental analysis, staffing and directing, and implementing. Without environmental analysis, the planning and structuring of group activities might not be strategic and effective. Team building is an important strategy used in contemporary school organizations for achievement of good and quality performance of teachers in work groups (Bailey, 1991; Maeroff, 1993; Seers & Cashman, 1991; McEwan, 1997). Ignorance of staffing and directing at the group level would hinder the development of team spirit and synergy. This appears to be problematic if we expect effective performance of work groups in implementing their action plans.

There seems to be lack of clear components that are expected to facilitate self management at the group level. We may suggest that a concrete and self iterative management process should be built in the SMI framework if we expect work groups should be continuously self learning and developing.

Contributions to the Individual Teacher Level. The analysis reveals that the contribution of the SMI components to facilitate teacher level self management is very limited (Table 1 refers). The only contribution identified is the formalization of individual staff appraisal system. This system is set up in the accountability framework of the SMI policy. It could help teachers to develop and improve their performance if the appraisal is carried out in a supportive and formative manner in addition to its summative and evaluative functions.

However, with staff appraisal as the sole component, individual teacher self management can not be initiated and facilitated. It seems that the SMI policy has overlooked or over simplified the importance of human initiative and staff developmental needs in school-based management. A school practising site-based management without self managing teachers will not gain the promised effectiveness. We should have a comprehensive yet concrete mechanism to tap the initiatives of teachers through empowering them for effective self management at the individual level. This mechanism should facilitate individual teachers to engage in continuous self learning and professional development while self managing their own work.

Table 1

Possible Contributions of SMI to Facilitate Multi-level Self Management

Stage of Multi-level Self Management Cycle	*To School Level*	*To Group Level*	*To Individual Teacher Level*
Environmental Analysis	• last year's school profile as a base for analysis • school needs to analyze its strengths and weaknesses	No clear component	No clear component
Planning & Structuring (Affiliating)	• the roles and responsibilities of the key actors for delivering education in school are defined (e.g. principal's manual) • school needs to set up its own mission, goals, and annual school plans based on the identified strengths and weaknesses • school needs to set up its own policy and procedures • flexibility in utilization of funds and resources through creation of a block grant and special approved grants	• work groups need to produce program plans for achievement of school goals	No clear component
Staffing (Developing) & Directing	• formalize the practice of staff development	No clear component	No clear component
Implementing	• flexibility in utilization of funds and resources (e.g. allow schools to have savings up to 5% of staff establishment for staff and non-staff purpose)	No clear component	No clear component
Monitoring & Evaluating	• school needs to produce annual school profiles	• work groups need to contribute their own evaluation reports for preparation of annual school profile	• formalize the practice of staff appraisal

Cross-Level Contributions. The above analysis suggests that the SMI policy has generally provided a foundation for practising self management at the school level. However, the links between components are not clear and not sufficient to facilitate effective self management at multi-levels. Further, this link problem also exists across levels. In particular, there are only simplistic relationships between the school level and group level components. No clear relationships are exhibited between the group and individual level components, and between the school and individual level components. Thus, the stress of mutual support and coherent practice of self management activities across levels is absent. Without mutual support and consistent of self management practices across levels, the synergy required for effective performance and for building up a self management culture in school may not be generated. This synergy is important for reducing internal wastage of the precious and limited resources, tapping human initiative, and building up of collegiality. Thus, it is crucial for multi-level self management to be implemented successfully for quality education and school effectiveness.

Direction for Further Development

Keeping in mind the already effective and successful features of SMI policy, the analysis above suggests that there are still rooms for continuous development of the policy in order to have effective school-based management in schools. Based on the multi-level self management conception of Cheung & Cheng (1996a), the direction for further development is proposed as follows:

1. **Focus on Human Initiative**. The spirit for further development should aim at unleashing human initiative for self learning, self development and self actualization of teachers. This is the guiding principle for further policy efforts to bring about educational outcomes from school-based management. Therefore, the new SMI policy measures should encourage human initiative in self managing their work not only at the school and group levels but also at the individual teacher level.

2. **Introduce Multi-level Self Management**. A concrete mechanism which can facilitate self management at the school, group and individual levels should be instituted in the SMI policy. This is a key measure of effective school-based management. Currently, school-based management initiatives in different parts of the workd, including SMI in Hong Kong, often assume that decentralizing authorities and responsibilities to the school-site level can automatically result in improvement of educational outcomes. This assumption is problematic. Being externally controlled for a long time, schools very often could not function in a self managing way to acquire the kind of responsiveness and flexibility to meet the changing challenges. Thus, it is very important to introduce a concrete and easy way to practise multi-level self management to schools if we want to further develop the SMI policy. Based on the Cheung & Cheng (1996a), the conception of self management cycle at each level may include the components such as environmental analysis, planning and structuring (affiliating), staffing (developing) and directing, evaluating and monitoring.

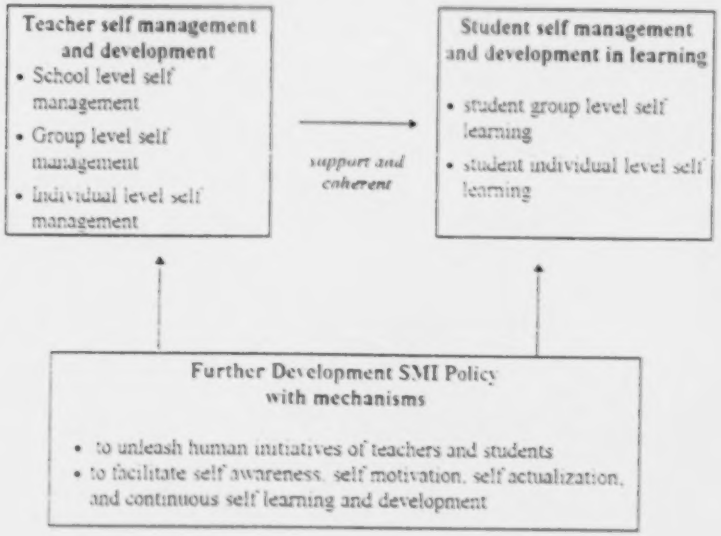
3. **Consistent Practice across Levels**. The self management mechanism in school should allow the key actors at multi-levels to have coherent self management practice. In other words, the practice and effect of self management at the individual, group, and the school level are mutually supporting and facilitating to reduce any internal wastage and produce the necessary synergy for quality education in school. With the

consistent practice of self management at the three levels, the school can develop a strong culture for continous learning and development in a changing education environment.

4 **Student Self Management and Development**. Considering the importance of human self initiative and the strong culture of teacher self management in school, we can suggest that all students should also be self learning, developing, and actualizing in order to achieve the optimal educational outcomes. Thus, it will be a very important direction of SMI development with target on establishing a mechanism for student self management and development at their school work. The term 'school work' includes activities like reading, working on assignment, organizing class activities, participation in extra-curricular activities, and etc. Since students often work individually and in groups, a two-level framework may be proposed to students to achieve the necessary competence and attitude to be self managing and developing. This framework can provide a mechanism embedding the three characteristics mentioned above for the three-level teacher self management. It is hoped that the student self management mechanism could facilitate students to be continuous self learning, developing, responsive, adaptable and proactive to meet their challenges ahead in the new century.

The overall framework for further developing the SMI policy is sketched in Figure 1. There are two parts of multi-level self management in school: teacher self management and student self management. It is hoped that with these two self management parts incorporated in the new SMI policy, teachers and students will be working and studying in a self managing and learning culture. Thus, enhanced performance in school at multi-level may be anticipated.

Figure 1
Proposed Further Development of SMI Policy


Teacher self management and development
• School level self management
• Group level self management
• Individual level self management
support and coherent
Student self management and development in learning
• student group level self learning
• student individual level self learning
Further Development SMI Policy with mechanisms
• to unleash human initiatives of teachers and students
• to facilitate self awareness, self motivation, self actualization, and continuous self learning and development

Conclusion

Self management in school has been widely implemented world-wide. In Hong Kong, SMI has started with a right step that has gained positive experience from schools in general. The present paper attempts to analyze the practice of SMI in the light of the multi-level self management

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framework. It proposes that in order to tap the best from SMI, the self management framework in school may be further developed into two: 3-level teacher self management and 2-level student self management. It is hoped that the new framework can facilitate the key actors, teachers and students to work in a supportive culture in which all members are engaged in continuous learning and development.

To achieve this, there are some necessary conditions to be met. One of these is the readiness of the school management to empower teachers and teachers to empower students, and certainly the readiness for teachers and students to be empowered. To meet this end, these key actors should be unfreezed at multi-levels and appropriate implementation strategies should be employed if effective self management at multi-level is expected (for details, see Cheung & Cheng, 1997b in press).

If the further development of SMI can follow the above direction, the effects and advantages of practising school-based management in Hong Kong could be further enhanced to empower our schools in quality education delivery. It is also hoped that the analysis and recommendations proposed in this paper could also provide insights for policy makers and practitioners in other parts of the world to rethink and formulate further development plans of their school-based management initiatives.

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